



Directors Corner

Communication

We reached another milestone with Vision 21 (V21) on September 1: Dealer e-Tags. Now auto dealerships use the internet to electronically process temporary tags, the paper tag displayed on vehicles.

Technology

The e-Tag system creates a database that law enforcement can access, which means they can greatly reduce the risk of fraudulent tags and are able to match the tag to the vehicle's owner.

Data Management

The e-Tag system was a major technology project that required the cooperation of the Texas Department of Transportation's Motor Vehicle Division, which is responsible for e-Tags policy and procedures; the Technology Services Division, which is responsible for supporting the system; the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR), which was directed in law to oversee the development of the e-Tag system; and an outside vendor, which VTR contracted with to do the e-Tag programming. As you can see, there were a large number of people working to launch e-Tags. We also invited the state's two largest dealer associations, the Texas Automobile Dealers Association and the Texas Independent Automobile Dealers Association, to assist with system testing prior to launch.

Process Mapping

Statute Review

Fee Study

Our pre-launch pilot of the system involved hundreds of dealers and everything ran well for two months. Beginning on September 1, however, something happened to make the e-Tag system performance inconsistent. Some dealers were able to use it without any problems, but others couldn't print e-Tags and some dealers weren't able to access the system at all. We elected to temporarily bring the system down to have sufficient time to identify and fix the problem.

This glitch was a humbling reminder to us that sometimes big things cannot be accomplished without a few growing pains. I want to apologize to all the state's dealerships and tax assessors for the inconvenience.

The good news is the system is ready and dealers can begin issuing e-Tags on October 1. I want to thank dealers for their patience, and everyone who worked so hard to bring the system back online.

Regards,

Rebecca Davio

Communication

To make sure V21 delivers what our customers and partners want and need, the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division conducted several focus groups across the state and a telephone survey that represented the demographic makeup of Texas.

In this issue, we share a few highlights from the survey. In future issues, we will share what we discovered from focus groups with the salvage dealers and new and used auto dealers, as well as the feedback we've received from the tax assessor-collectors on what they want to see in a new V21 system.

Findings from the survey of 1,236 people across Texas include:

- 81 percent said it was important to find vehicle information online
- 72 percent said it was important to be able to renew registrations online
- 75 percent want additional hours to register their vehicles
- 76 percent want more locations to register their vehicles
- 75 percent of those who make purchases via the internet favor electronic titles
- Overall, 51 percent support electronic titles (This would eliminate paper titles.)
- 63 percent would like to register all their family vehicles at one time
- 88 percent said uninsured motorists are a major concern
- 76 percent said they are concerned about people driving with expired registration stickers

Technology

On August 1, VTR launched another facet of the V21 technology project. Programming changes now allow online ordering of license plates from the My Plates Web site. Customers can go to www.myplates.com to order personalized specialty license plates. Once the plates are manufactured, they are sent to the customer's county tax office for pick up. Online orders must be picked up at the county tax office because workers there must assign the plates to the customer's vehicle.

Currently, we are expanding this project so vendor plates also can be ordered at the state's 254 county tax offices. When a customer orders at the county tax office, the plates will be mailed to the customer's home because when plates are ordered at the county, the vehicle assignment is made as part of the ordering process.

And don't forget that all of our Charity Plates, which benefit non-profit government programs or organizations, can be ordered online at www.texasonline.com or at the county tax offices.

Data Management

The success of V21 rests on the quality of our motor vehicle records. Accurate records make everyone happy.

Unfortunately, title record corrections often involve inconveniencing our customers. Sometimes we have to send customers a notification letter and revoke their title. To avoid that unpleasant situation as much as possible in the future, we want to offer tips to those of you who input information into the database. We all will have to put forth a conscientious effort to ensure the records our customers trust us with and law enforcement relies upon stay as accurate as possible.

If you enter information into either the RTS or V21 systems, you can help reduce the number of database errors just by following a few simple guidelines.

- Retrieve records using vehicle identification numbers. Too often records are pulled up by an incorrectly entered license plate number and result in the wrong record being altered or erased from the system.
- When marking a title as salvage, be sure to select the right type of salvage ownership document from the drop-down box AND then go to the screen that allows you to select the appropriate salvage brand. If you don't do both, the brand will not be updated on the title record.

Process Mapping

In VTR, we are designing a plan that will ultimately change how we do business, so our map will need to be a good one. That is where Process Mapping comes in.

The mapping objective is to place customers first in all of our processes.

What a process map looks like is a series of circles, squares and rectangles joined by lines and arrows that redesign the current business environment. By erasing some of the old lines and introducing new ones, we are able to map out the best possible route to our destination, an easy-to-use, reliable, flexible system that allows VTR and our partners the tools to work efficiently, while making it as easy as possible to transact their title, registration and license plate business.

While many of the objectives can be facilitated through the use of technology, it also means streamlining business processes and looking for opportunities to improve customer service that go beyond technology. The new map offers the Texas motoring public increased convenience, multiple options and simplified procedures when registering and titling their vehicles. VTR is mapping for success!

Statute Review

Have you ever turned to the state Transportation Code (TRC) to find an answer to a question, only to be more confused than when you began your research? Well, have no fear; the Statute Review Team is here.

For V21 to effectively communicate title and registration intent to our customers, partners and stakeholders, the laws governing these activities must be clear. To this end, the Statute Review Team is working to:

- Update and simplify TRC language
- Standardize definitions
- Reorganize and consolidate similar topics
- Remove and relocate procedures to Administrative Rules
- Propose changes that will enable the efficient functioning of the V21 technology

The proposed legislative changes, if approved during the next legislative session, will help eliminate ambiguity, establish consistency and provide the information and tools we all need to succeed.

Fee Study

In 1986, a first-class stamp cost 22 cents, a dozen eggs was 87 cents and a gallon of gas was 93 cents. Today, those prices seem like a bargain.

It seems everything has gone up to adjust for the cost of doing business. Yet, our registration and title fees for passenger, commercial motor vehicles and motorcycles have not been adjusted for 22 years. As a result, research from the Fee Study revealed that in today's market those fees lost 83 percent of their buying power.

Revenue from our fees goes to build and maintain the state's roads and bridges. Construction costs are skyrocketing at the same time our fees have lost more than 80 percent of their original value as a result of cumulative inflation.

We are looking at these fees and consulting with members of the Transportation Commission and TxDOT administration. The majority of our fees – 75 percent – were set by the Legislature. Any adjustments must also be made by lawmakers.



Have a V21 question?
E-mail them to:
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